

Havoc: from a TV Standpoint

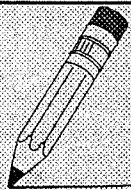
A Big Letdown

MATWATCH '94

LATE OCTOBER FLAIR RETIREMENT EDITION VOL. 2, NO. 10

Steve

BEVERLY



Sunday night on The Real Wrestling Hotline, I was reminded of a day in 1989 when Dave Meltzer, Scott Hudson and I—along with 35 or so other ultra-hardcores from across America—converged on Nashville for the first *Wrestle War*. Our hotline guru, Lance Russell, was there as well. We were treated that day to a mid-show concert with The Oak Ridge Boys (an experiment never repeated). We also saw Ric Flair defeat Ricky Steamboat for a sixth NWA title reign, ending one of the great series of the 1980s.

As we headed back to the downtown hotel for our final goodbyes, Dave Dick Bourne and I were commenting how promising we felt things were for WCW and how the Nashville show certainly had the earmark of setting WCW on the course it should have started on when Ted Turner first bought the company.

The last thing on anyone's mind that early evening was of Flair going down to Hulk Hogan in a career-ending bout, much less as an employee of World Championship Wrestling. The fact of that happening this past weekend, coupled with the fact so few of us travel to pay-per-view events today says mounds how the past five-and-a-half years have changed us.

Set aside the matter of very few of us believing this was the last pro match we'll see Flair in—for WCW or anyone else, stipulations or not.

No doubt, Sunday night's show drew the biggest buy-rate in the history of World Championship Wrestling and I have little doubt it will rake in the most revenue WCW will ever see from a spectacular. Ted Turner's group will never again be able to consolidate enough of a following for Hogan vs. Smog Monster, or whatever behemoth is created to throw up against him.

As much as I hate admitting it, Vince McMahon had a point in his recent *Newsport* interview when he said every character—even a Hogan—has a definite shelf life in entertainment as the top star. Business-wise, he can still pull in twice as many pay-per-view buys as Flair alone, strictly on the Hogan name. But, as they say in Waycross, Ga., Hogan hasn't meant doodly-squat for weekly TV ratings. The biggest number he's drawn on a weekend cable show is 2.7. Syndication is below a 5.

But as painful as this is for Flair fans to accept, Flair's shelf life has also grown stale. He should have beaten WCW to the draw and gone out in a triumphant blaze while he was still on top. Flair should have been perceptive enough to see he would be crushed by a Hogan entry into WCW. Further, he should have stayed with the family man image created for him last December and taken three pay-per-views and two *Clash of the Champions* opponents, ending with a major celebration *Bash-at-the-Beach* retirement bout. He could have eventually "unretired" for the one big bout and payday against Hogan.

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Lackluster Stab At Building Career- Ending Emotion



It was supposed to be the dramatic crescendo for the two biggest mat names of the past 20 years.

Instead, World Championship Wrestling frittered away an opportunity to create the most heart-rendering emotion in pay-per-view wrestling history and snuffed out—for a temporary period—Ric Flair's vaunted career with a whimper.

Halloween Havoc preliminary buy-rate estimates will likely not be available before this Friday or next Monday. However, as a television show, the producing and creativity to intensify the impending retirement of either Hulk Hogan or Flair was a major disappointment.

While a mild attempt to recap the recent Hogan-

COMMENTARY

Flair saga was made in the early moments, the effort was akin to using Lava soap as a face cleanser. Not even the standout booking of the main event and the post-match angle with the Ed Leslie as the Black Scorpion swerve and a rarity of Hogan pay-per-view celebration ending with Hulk laying could save it.

This special post-*Havoc* analysis will offer what we feel the alternative should have been, from a producer's standpoint, to depict a show with the import of its main event stipulations.

SHOW OPEN

Without doubt, WCW fouled this one up from the very start. They may be aging but this was supposed to be the game's two major names going at it—one of them for the last time. Egos of the two notwithstanding, this called for a larger-than-life opening, one

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Havoc Fails Bid To Build Emotion

(Continued from Page 1)

comparable to the dramatic NFL teasers CBS once did—and now Fox does—prior to its feature games of the week; comparable to the lead-in produced for the Larry Holmes-Muhammad Ali title bout in 1980 which ended Ali's storied career; comparable to the sequence ABC Sports produced on Arnold Palmer before his final U.S. Open last summer. WCW failed miserably to deliver here. All we received were a token video production and the typical *Halloween Havoc* graphics. Other than the Nasty Boys piledriving Terry Funk on a pumpkin, the theme was never even followed.

The company did a far superior job last December when Flair put his career on the line against Vader with the emotional scenes with his family at his Charlotte home and Gene Okerlund's ride to the arena with Flair. That captured a rare glimpse in the fictional world of pro wrestling of a man whose entire livelihood was on the line by his own choosing. How better to build the drama than an almost documentary look inside the lives of both men when two are putting themselves in the same ultimate jeopardy? The opening of this show was critical to putting the nerves of viewers on edge with emotion. Instead, WCW relied on the routine.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

With all that was riding on this one, every between-match segment should have focused on Flair-Hogan, rather than the retrospective buildup for every other match on the show (a technique we often favor, but given the unique nature of this main event, the recaps should have been far more limited). Vignettes of past key matches of each could have been shown in quick clips (plenty of vintage non-WWF Hogan material was accessible and virtually the entire Flair library is owned by WCW).

Even the interviews with Hogan and Flair were of the typical Saturday night variety, full of clichés and other standard fare, on an evening where believability suggests they would be reacting in anything but their regular personas.

Further, for something this significant, why weren't past world champions brought into ringside to analyze the bout? Jim Herd managed to corral seven of them for a *Clash* in 1989. Heck, Nick Bockwinkel and Harley Race work for WCW. So do Dusty Rhodes and Larry Zbyszko. Could Gene Kiniski, Dory Funk Jr., Sgt. Slaughter or Lou Teshz not have been found? All of them would have delivered a far more intelligible

analysis and interview than the babbling of Thomas (Hitman) Hearns. A special ringside circle could have been built for champions' interviews and Gordon Solie should have conducted them.

IN-SHOW INTERVIEWS

There is another major area where this show failed to satisfy. Even the pre-taped backstage interviews with Flair and Hogan were of the typical Saturday night variety, full of clichés and standard fare on an evening when believability suggests they would be reacting in anything but their regular personas. The spots generated little intensity viewers haven't heard before and the deliveries were on the same plane as a politician offering a standard stump speech.

Okerlund, at some point, should have sat each man down and done an "inside-your-head" type of interview, without Jimmy Hart or Sherri Martel present, pressing them on what it would mean if this was his last match. Again, last year's Charlotte spectacular was far superior in this area.

(Continued on Page 5)

Steve Beverly

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None of us sat in on the meeting which led to this decision for a dual-career ender. But no less an expert than former WCW announcer Jim Ross, who *should* have been calling this bout, said on a radio program of mine the Friday before the show, "It's hard to say why they decided to do it this way but they've probably gone to this career stipulation too early. They didn't have to do that this time to get a big buy-rate."

Ross, who was most gracious on the program to the two principals involved and to the company, is right. One has to ask the question if this company was as desperate to overcome a reported \$3 million deficit, why make the agreement to retain Flair through March 1997, as Meltzer reported Sunday night was a concession for him to do the job? The man was under contract through March 1995. If he refused to work at company direction and money is at such a premium, declare a breach and save the unpaid remainder of the money owed Flair for this year and whatever salary settled for in the next two years? Either way, the guy will never be a credible contender for Hogan again after this three-bout series.

One has to further wonder if Flair, who so jealously guarded his title belt when TBS first bought WCW, honestly felt he would come out of a series with Hogan with a split, or at least one legitimate victory out of the three. When Eric Bischoff was first negotiating with Hogan, we were told stories of how Hogan and Flair were friends and Flair was brought into the talks. But common sense—all too often an omission in pro wrestling—suggests Flair was not picturing this direction.

To be truthful, I didn't shed any tears, nor would I have had I not had a significant idea of the finish in advance. Whereas I have admired the dedication to conditioning and the extraordinary ring ability of Flair, I am not one of the brigade who finds him the greatest of all time, either in the ring or in TV character. The sex pervert, 60-Minute Man image has often left me disgusted, though that has been popular with his hard-core followers. Then, again, his counterpart who now holds the belt has court-documented evidence of violating the sanctity of his all-American persona.

Then, again, I have this feeling WCW will erase the board on all of this in six to eight months when the weekly ratings do not rise and the pay-per-views don't draw blockbuster numbers with people like John Tenta as Hogan's foes. Bet the mortgage after a slow build, a 900 number question on a Saturday show will ask fans if Flair should be allowed out of retirement. After all, this is wrestling.

Steve Beverly



Fall Brawl Buys Fall At 0.57

ATLANTA—Despite claims of an 0.7 buy-rate, World Championship Wrestling attracted an estimated 0.57 per cent of the pay-per-view universe for *Fall Brawl*.

As expected, the September show—without live appearances by Hulk Hogan or Ric Flair—reverted to the patterns for WCW shows prior to Hogan's hiring.

The figure—if estimates hold up, based on leading cable operators—would equal 128,500 subscriptions and a total gross of \$3.34 million, \$1.83 million of which will be divided by WCW and Turner Home Entertainment.

Missy Finally Files Lawsuit

ATLANTA—Former WCW manager and broadcast personality Melissa (Missy Hyatt) Hiatt has filed a lawsuit against Turner Broadcasting System, World Championship Wrestling and three named parties.

WXIA-TV reported Hiatt's suit, coming seven months after she went public with charges of alleged sexual harassment and sex discrimination charges against the companies, was filed Oct. 18 in U.S. District Court in Atlanta.

The suit officially asks "in excess of \$10,000," but inside sources say Hiatt is asking for \$4 million in damages from WCW, TBS, WCW president Bill Shaw, executive vice president Bob Dhue and senior vice president Eric Bischoff.

Hiatt claims a partially nude photo of her was posted in a public place in CNN Center and contends WCW reneged on a pledge to renew her contract. WCW has had no comment on the case.

Mania, Worldwide Gain Dish Slots

NEW YORK—WWF *Mania* and WCW *Worldwide* now have weekly advance feeds for satellite dish owners.

Mania now airs Fridays at 10 a.m. (ET) on Galaxy 7, channel 18. The feed is for the European Sky network.

Worldwide's Canadian feed is Friday mornings at 1:30 a.m. (ET) on Anik E2, channel 16 (CTV network).



END OF AN ERA?

✠ Ric Flair does not return to active wrestling after Sunday night's *Halloween Havoc*, then the Flair era was shoved in the mat as few veteran followers of the NWA/WCW national period would ever have predicted.

As our lead story analysis indicates, WCW may have done the poorest job in history of creating the proper emotion for a show with the main event stipulations as *Havoc* offered. The television show itself was produced with too much routine for a dramatic end.

The truth is—while this show will likely serve to bring in record pay-per-view revenues to World Championship Wrestling, both Flair and Hulk Hogan have held onto their "top of the show" status far too long for the long-term good of their company. In the short term, Hogan will continue to draw significantly more pay subscribers than Flair, simply because he has been the best-marketed name in the history of wrestling and the babyface image enhances that drawing power.

Yet, the overriding question remains: who carries the banner for WCW into the future, if anyone can, as its standardbearer? Sting has been their apparent for nearly six years and has held a version of the world belt five times, yet, suffered from gross mismarketing from the moment Ole Anderson slapped the infamous Black Scorpion feud on him in 1990. Steve Austin has come a dramatic way in interviewing skills and ring performance. However, the Hogan regime appears destined only to hold back Austin as a supporting player.

The short future suggests, even with bad and cliché-ridden opponents, Hogan will bring in more pay-cable money than ever for WCW. But will Hogan retain the veto power to dictate his successor? *Matwatch '94* suggests World Championship Wrestling best do some serious study on that question to be sure the future is being plotted now and its long-term leader is decided on the basis of what is best for the company, not what embarrasses Hulk Hogan the least.

MISSY FINALLY FILES

✠ Just last week, *Matwatch '94* suggested, in short, the time has come for Missy Hyatt to put up or shut up in her quest to make World Championship Wrestling pay for alleged sexual harassment and discrimination.

Ms. Hyatt has, indeed, put up—having filed her lawsuit against TBS, WCW and three WCW executives shortly after most of you received the last issue. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is not holding a hearing on Hyatt's case after its springtime investigation.

Hyatt best be prepared for an onslaught of questions to be publicly raised about her own professional and personal lives, including the nature of her TV and ring persona and whether those personalities intertwined. TBS attorneys will be prepped to make a concerted defense against Hyatt's charges, should the case ever reach court—a highly doubtful prospect, indeed. Realistically, Turner will attempt to avoid a dirty laundry airing of its least-favorite subsidiary at a time Ted Turner is lobbying heavily to buy a major network.

This case could either be little more than smoke and mirrors for Hyatt or it could result in embarrassment for the Turner organization. Considering the track record of both parties, a little of both may be the end result, though the burden of proof is clearly on Hyatt. No matter, the case is finally on the legal table. But if Hyatt has any common sense, she will avoid the type of in-character appearances she made at the recent *Blackjack Brawl* until the case is over.

TO TELL THE TRUTH

✠ The old issue of credibility rears its head again on the issue of pay-per-view buy-rates and revenues. In the last week, several national publications, including *Electronic Media*—one of the most respected trade journals in broadcasting—have accepted the unvarnished press release of Titan Sports concerning subscriptions for *Summer Slam*.

In the weekly magazine's "Cable Notes" section of its Oct. 17 edition, writer Jessica Solomon declares, "The World Wrestling Federation's August pay-per-view event, *WWF Summerslam*, grossed \$11.3 million from an estimated 410,000 purchasing households, an increase of nearly 15 percent over last year."

Wethinks Ms. Solomon merely rubberstamped Titan Sports' word, without even attributing a source, an old failing of the mainstream media during the

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THE RATINGS PAGE

CABLE RATINGS (Thru 10/17)

Oct. Avgs.	Rtg/Shr	Homes	Year Ago	Sept.
Mon. Night Raw	2.7/3.8	1.66 mil.	2.9/4.2	2.6/3.7
WCW Sat. Night	2.1/4.6	1.31 mil.	2.1/4.4	2.1/4.8
WCW Main Event	2.0/4.1	1.23 mil.	1.4/3.0	1.7/3.4
WWF All-American	1.5/4.0	933,000	1.9/5.7	1.5/3.9
WCW Pro*	1.3/4.7	771,000	1.5/6.3	1.3/5.2
WWF Mania	1.2/3.8	746,000	1.2/4.0	1.2/4.1

COMBINED AVG.

WWF	1.8/3.9	1.11 mil.	2.1/4.6	1.8/4.5
WCW	1.7/4.3	1.06 mil.	1.7/4.4	1.7/4.5

Week Ending Oct. 3

Monday Night Raw	2.7/3.8	1.68 million	2.9/4.1
WCW Sat. Night	2.1/4.6	1.31 million	1.7/3.8
WCW Main Event	1.9/3.4	1.17 million	1.2/2.7
WWF All-American	1.4/3.8	871,000	2.0/6.1
WCW Pro	1.2/4.1	926,000	1.6/7.1
WWF Mania	1.1/3.5	685,000	1.3/4.2

COMBINED AVG.

WCW	1.73/4.0	1.07 million	1.5/4.5
WWF	1.73/3.7	1.08 million	2.1/4.5

Week Ending Oct. 10

Mon. Night Raw	2.5/3.7	1.56 million	2.9/4.1
WCW Sat. Night	2.1/4.7	1.31 million	2.3/4.7
WCW Main Event**	2.1/3.9	1.30 million	1.7/3.8
WWF All-American	1.3/3.4	810,000	2.1/6.0
WWF Mania	1.1/3.2	684,000	1.2/3.7
WCW Pro***	0.9/3.4	557,000	N/A

COMBINED AVG.

WCW	1.7/4.0	1.05 million	2.0/4.3
WWF	1.63/3.4	1.01 million	2.1/4.6

Week Ending Oct. 17

Monday Night Raw	2.8/4.0	1.74 million	3.0/4.3
WCW Sat. Night	2.2/4.6	1.36 million	2.3/4.8
WWF All-American	1.7/4.8	1.06 million	1.9/5.1
WWF Mania	1.4/4.6	872,000	1.2/4.0
WCW Pro	1.3/5.3	804,000	1.4/5.5

COMBINED AVG.

WWF	1.97/4.5	1.22 million	2.03/4.5
WCW	1.75/5.0	1.08 million	1.7/4.3

* Comparisons to last year's WCW Power Hour

** Live telecast

*** Aired one hour earlier than usual

THE OCTOBER STORY

The numbers—with the final two weekends left to report in the five-week month (total ratings in the November issue of *Matwatch '94*)—are indicative of the downward flight of mat ratings over one year ago, even with WCW's acquisition of Hulk Hogan. With the exception of *WCW Main Event*, which was helped a bit by its live Oct. 9 telecast, every cable show was down or flat over last year.

Each of the first three editions of *Monday Night Raw* showed erosion over the same week in 1993, with the sharpest decline for the Oct. 10 edition—down to a 2.5 from a 2.9 a year ago. Part of the dropoff can be attributed to weaker overall telecasts; the falloff in the first two editions can be blamed, in part, on NFL football runovers on the West Coast, which bled anywhere from 20 to 48 minutes into the western feed of *Raw*.

WCW Saturday Night was even with its 1993 October levels but the Oct. 10 and 17 episodes were both off from last year. In addition to falling overall interest, even with Hogan, the increase in college football ratings on both ABC and ESPN have taken a slight toll in TBS homes.

The *Main Event* increase is a bit artificial. Even the live telecast could not generate more than a 2.1 rating; plus, part of last year's drastically low performance was due to a 1.2 in the first October week. Still, TBS is pleased with the 43 per cent jump over last year, no matter the reason.

The performance of *All-American* is indicative of why the show finally bit the dust for a new format after an 11-year run. The traditional WWF Sunday show had shown marked decline over year-ago figures for five consecutive months and showed no signs of a comeback. Only the 1.7 in its final week prevented the hour from total embarrassment. The week of Oct. 10 tied the all-time low rating for *All-American* and dipped to the lowest share in the history of the series.

The morning hours continue to show a stationary performance—both flat from September and *WCW Pro* down from last October's *Power Hour* effort. The TBS show could muster only a 1.3 in its two regular-time offerings, down 13 per cent from last year. *Mania* was even with month-ago and year-ago figures at 1.2.

The trends may also well explain why WCW is considering shifting the emphasis of *Pro* to younger performers who rarely make the pay-per-view telecasts. The squash match-flashback-single main event focus does not appear to be registering the interest during the show's first month.

A new category this month is the combined averages for the three shows of both groups. The table provides an interesting week-to-week analysis of overall interest in the cable offerings, particularly compared to year-ago figures. WCW appears no better than even with last year for the first three weeks in October and Titan is down 14 per cent, heavily attributed to the collapse of *All-American*.

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

OPTION I

DAVE MELTZER (M-W-F)

HOTLINE OBSERVER

STEVE BEVERLY (TU-SAT)

THE WAY THINGS
OUGHT TO BE

900 MATWATCH

SCOTT HUDSON (THU)

THURSDAY POTPOURRI

RON LEMIEUX (SUN)

WEEKEND WRAPUP

1-900-903-9030

OPTION II

MIKE MOONEYHAM (M)

SCOTT HUDSON (TU)

RON LEMIEUX (W)

PAUL MACARTHUR/
DAVE SKONICK (TH)

CRITIC-AT-LARGE (FR)

CODY BOYNS (SA)

G'ANN MAKROPOULOS (SU)

Halloween Havoc Analysis

(Continued from Page 2)

ANALYSIS

The easy temptation would be to complain again about Tony Schiavone's work. It's not that Schiavone is the worst at this. In fact, in spurts he was better than several of his recent efforts. However, this should have been the show where Schiavone had a call in him like Jim Ross for the first of the Ricky Steamboat-Ric Flair title bouts in 1989, the yardstick by which all pay-per-view play-by-play calls are measured. Clearly, Schiavone didn't have it here.

Probably, he hit a peak during the Arn Anderson-Dustin Rhodes match and never rose above that intensity. One problem with Schiavone is one he may not be able to control—his vocal level is such that when he raises the intensity in his voice, he comes across as a 14-year-old whose voice is changing. The power of delivery simply isn't there. Particularly during the between-bout gaps, Schiavone lapsed at least three times into a disinterested tone which has plagued him the last year. No more was this evident during his pitch to the commercial for the poorly-plugged *When Worlds Collide*. Schiavone, who has been under fire in the company for his petulance at researching the Lucha Libre circuit to help sell the show, decidedly demonstrated his lack of concern for it.

Overall, however, Ross, Lance Russell or even Solie would have turned in superior performances to Schiavone on a show of this import. Schiavone ought to obtain tapes of the great Ed Capral from the 1960s and '70s if he'd genuinely like to bone up for a big-show performance.

As for Bobby Heenan, he is without peer at what he does, though he would be far stronger with Ross as his counterpoint. Virtually everyone in the company outside of the stubborn WCW president Bill Shaw knows it. Our colleague Meltzer was puzzled at some of Heenan's references to dated Detroit personalities, such as Al Kaline and Norm Cash—but that didn't bother us, particularly, since we grew up during their era.

Heenan has lapsed into a trap of the overhype in the last two shows, saying each was "the greatest pay-per-view I've ever seen," when neither was. However, his most poignant line of the evening came during the ring entrances for Hogan and Flair when he said, "This was the match everyone wanted to see....but I don't think anyone wants to see this one."

THE FINISH

Okay, insulting as it was to Flair, to sell that post-match angle, the only virtual way was to get Flair out of the way with little trumpeting. Perhaps the most telling fracture to Schiavone's credibility was when he referred to Flair after the pinfall as "one of the greatest of all time" after spending a career exalting him as "the greatest of all time."

But if WCW and Eric Bischoff wanted to have ended this one in a classy way—Hogan promotion or not—it would have set aside four to five minutes after the goodnights were said for a nostalgic, almost misty-eyed montage of highlights of Flair's career.

Much in the same fashion as ABC used to do at the end of the season's final game of *Monday Night Football* when it would recap the season in film clips to Frank Sinatra's "Here's to the Winners," or CBS does after the final game of the NCAA basketball tournament, a slow, understated music selection was in order to convey a sense of memories, a wistful look back and a hats off salute to Flair. Lots of slow motion and varied emotions in the pictures. The entire montage could have been pre-edited except for a slo-mo shot of the fatal three-count to Hogan, which could have been tacked on with a fade to black and a fade back up to a still-frame closeup of Flair over the copyright.

If anything, this would have capped the evening in a larger-than-life fashion and would have been at least a small bone to the Flair fans who are bound to stay away from the next few pay-per-view shows as a protest against what they interpret as a slap at their icon. Hogan may have vetoed it but this is one time where Bischoff and Shaw could have told him, "Bud, you've got your belt, you've destroyed him as a contender, you have him out of the way...but this is one call which isn't yours."

OVERALL

This analysis does not pretend to review the quality of matches or whether the main event was enough to save, at best, a mediocre show. But from a television standpoint, WCW missed a major opportunity to set a standard here by telling a story with emotion in the intangibles of production values. Unquestionably, it will not go down as a show to remember.

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The Best of Early Fall

1. Buddy Landell, UWSA: "Like I told Ric Flair, I'm ten years younger, I'm ten pounds lighter...and a lot better looking!" 2. Bobby Heenan, *WCW Sat. Night*, on Kevin Sullivan's stand-on-stomach: "That's enough to bring up your Thanksgiving dinner—from 1957." 3. Scott Bowden, USWA: "Wrestling with me is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get." 4. Jerry Lawler, *WWF Superstars*: "I'll be politically correct. Our guest ring announcer is facially challenged." 5. Lawler, *WWF*, on female fan: "The bigger the hair, the smaller the brain." 6. Lawler, *WWF*: "In Nashville, if you're asked for your ID, you show your belt buckle." 7. Heenan, *WCW Sat. Night*: "Bagwell should have a mask on, too. He's not that good-looking a guy." 8. Lance Russell, USWA: "Tommy Rich makes you want to drink a bottle of Maalox." 9. Heenan, *Halloween Havoc*, on the Sullivans: "These guys destroyed four homes in one year." 10. Heenan, *Havoc*, on Hogan vs. Flair: "This isn't *Let's Make a Deal*. Nobody's going to get zonked."

11. Heenan, *Havoc*, on Arn Anderson: "He can change a transmission without tools." 12. Heenan, *Havoc*: "The Angel doesn't know if he's in Marietta or Haiti." 13. Jim Ross, *WNWS Sportstalk*: "Hogan-Flair will get a tremendous interest but I believe they did go to the career-ending stipulation a little quick." 14. Steve Beverly, *The Real Wrestling Hotline*: "When it comes to producing a TV show with the kind of tension you want to see in a career-vs.-career ending with these guys, Bischoff would have failed Production 101." 15. Dave Meltzer/Beverly, *TRWH*, on Kevin vs. Dave Sullivan: (DM) "You may think that was the worst match you've seen all year but it was great compared to the one they had in Oakland." (SB) "You haven't seen Jeff Gaylord against the Spellbinder."

Strongest Comments

1. Heenan, *HH*, on Hogan-Flair: "This is match everyone wanted to see...but I don't think anyone wants to see this one." 2. Scott Hudson, *TRWH*: "Tony Schiavone is, maybe, a cookie-cutter announcer. He'd be okay in an announcing school...but not in the lead role."

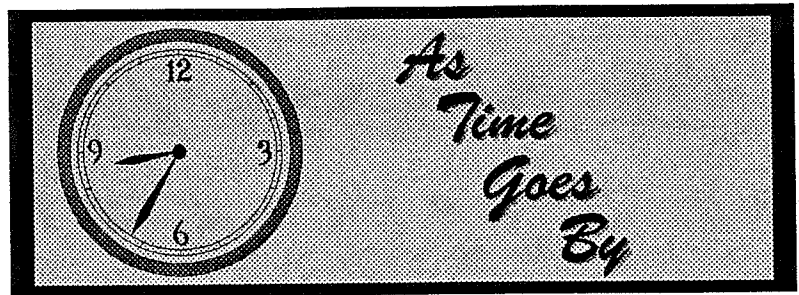
And the Rest....

BEST SIGN - HH, "Bischoff Will Pay for This Night."

SAY WHAT? - Vince McMahon, *Newsport Talk*: "The media were the most inaccurate, willing accomplices about steroids because they know absolutely nothing about them."

HYPE AWARD - Heenan, *HH*: "The main event, notwithstanding, this is the greatest pay-per-view I've ever seen."

BOO AWARDS - 1. McMahon, *Newsport*, for backhandedly defending the use of steroids by saying "the federal government funded them to help build up our Olympic athletes." I'm sure the U.S. Olympic Committee would like to debate McMahon on that subject. Plus, McMahon's public castigation of the judge in his federal trial is emblematic of his arrogance. 2. WCW, for failure to produce dramatic opening and closing segments to frame the import of the stipulations of *Halloween Havoc*. Bischoff may have gained his big buy-rate...but he didn't treat the show with the kind of detail a larger-than-life event of this nature merits.



Effective next weekend, WCW loses yet another superstation slot, cycling off WSBK/Boston. The *Worldwide* show never could garner better than a Saturday at 1:30 a.m. niche but the station does have a limited national reach.... Ironically, WSBK replaces WCW with reruns of *Hogan's Heroes*. Isn't that what WCW has become?....*Monday Night Raw* will be distributed by USA to its Latina service in Mexico beginning in November....*Survivor Series* will become the first pay-per-view mat show to have a simultaneous English and Spanish satellite feed....Jim Ross has added a Saturday afternoon college football call-in for WGST-AM in Atlanta to his Sunday morning Falcon preview duties....My thanks to Jim for guesting with me Oct. 21 when I subbed for my promising student Lee Nunamaker on her local sports call-in on WNWS-FM....Can someone explain to me how these IWCCW reruns, which lately have included not only old South Atlantic shows but obscure NAWA tapes, continue on these satellite networks?....NTV in Newfoundland (Anik E2, Channel 20) pre-emptes *WWF Superstars* Nov. 5 for a skating special.

Ross, Lance Russell or Gordon Solie would all have been an improvement over the disinterested performance Schiavone turned in on *Halloween Havoc*....The ads for *When Worlds Collide* have just appeared in the Oct. 31 issue of the various satellite dish mags. All they feature are the show's title and pictures of Perro Aguayo and Konnan. Tell me that will sell this show....Eddie Gilbert and long-time pal Steve Bowers plan to start an insider's newsletter and are plowing the waters to produce a half-hour TV series along the lines of the old *Pro Wrestling This Week* but I'm betting both will be tough....Some mention on the computer boards about a hardcore boycott of the next WCW pay-per-view but I doubt it'll be well-organized.

Syndication for WCW may have last weekend done the worst day-before sales job for a pay-per-view I've ever seen.... Lots of speculation the WCW Thanksgiving Omni show would already have been canceled except the company doesn't want to concede the weekend to Jim Cornette in Marietta....Because of the interest in *Halloween Havoc*, our second annual announcers' report card has been bumped to November.

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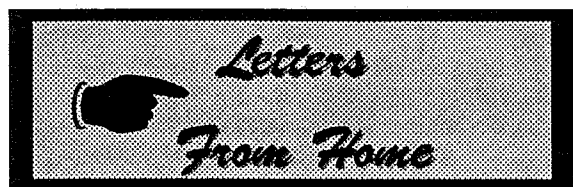
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The WWF is fresh off their most successful Baltimore house show in what seems like three years. The Hart Attack tour stopped at the Arena and I estimate the crowd at 5-to-6,000. They took a page out of the smart promotional strategy by running several newspaper ads.

Edie Bailey
Aberdeen, Md.

A year and a half ago, I was ready to kill Eric Bischoff over that ridiculous Sting/Davey Boy Smith bomb angle. But now I'm ready to kill him over the whole Ric Flair angle. If they wanted to retire him, that's one thing. But did they have to kill him like they did?

Ed Perkins
McKenzie, Tn.

I might believe they (WCW) could get a little mileage out of Hogan and Beefcake. But this business with John Tenta has got to go and Bischoff is going to find out sooner than he thinks that this isn't going to bring in big dollars.

Blake Neeley
Nashville

You've been predicting for three years we would see wrestling lose its grip as a national influence and now that Hogan-Flair is over, I honestly believe you're right. I can't think of anything in either the WWF or WCW which excites me right now.

Richard Flowers
Reidland, Ky.

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Will WCW Be Affected?

Turner Gets Okay To Bid on NBC

ATLANTA—Once considered a longshot, Ted Turner has been given a go-ahead to negotiate for the purchase of NBC from General Electric. How World Championship Wrestling could be affected by such a purchase is the source of widespread speculation.

In stories published Tuesday in *USA Today* and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, sources were quoted as saying Time Warner, which owns 19 per cent of Turner Broadcasting System, has removed its previous objections to Turner making a bid for the NBC Television Network and the seven network-owned television stations.

General Electric is said to be asking \$6 billion for a combination of NBC, the owned stations and its two cable networks, CNBC and America's Talking. To accomplish the deal, Turner may have to buy out his leading partners—Tele-Communications Inc., Comcast and Continental Cablevision—because federal regulations prevent a cable operator from owning more than five per cent of a broadcast network or controlling its operations.

However, media analyst Tom Wolzien told *USA Today* Turner has "the only organization that has outright synergy with NBC." Among the reasons cited for TBS being an ideal suitor: it could cut up to \$400 million of NBC's annual operating expenses by combining CNN with the NBC News operation and by using his movie libraries and production companies (New Line, Castle Rock and Hanna-Barbera) to supply programming.

In recent weeks, speculation has mounted outside the mainstream media how World Championship Wrestling would be affected by a Turner buyout of NBC. Among the scenarios listed by analysts of both the mat and broadcast industries:

- ✓ To help finance the purchase, Turner could be forced by his partners to sell or liquidate WCW and other unprofitable subsidiaries.
- ✓ A Turner buyout could make WTBS the NBC affiliate in Atlanta and its current superstation status could be folded into a basic cable network. However, long-term TBS program contracts would make this a difficult scenario. Under these circumstances, WCW would likely move to whatever new basic cable network would be formed.
- ✓ If Turner were to buy out his partners, he would take WCW right along with him and use it as a venue to expose the company nationally on NBC as Vince McMahon did the WWF for seven years on *Saturday Night's Main Event*.

On The Real Wrestling Hotline's *Halloween Havoc Reporters' Roundtable* Sunday night, analyst Scott Hudson speculated, "The key to WCW's future, I believe, is more tied to Ted's intentions of buying a network more than any of us realize."

Turner said he wanted to buy NBC last year for \$5 billion but was blocked by Time Warner. He took his case public in last month, saying in a news conference Time Warner wanted to buy the network on its own.

(Continued on Page 8)

Turner Bid For NBC May Be in Offing

(Continued from Page 7)

Turner tried and failed to buy CBS in 1985. However, he recently said he would have to own a major broadcast network to remain a significant competitor in the media configuration of the future.

Part of the deal could involve the sale of the Cartoon Network and perhaps Turner Network Television (TNT) to Time Warner in exchange for its voting stock in TBS. The wrestling company would not likely figure in any stock transfer.

The cable partners, which potentially share in pay-per-view revenues from wrestling, reportedly were among those within TBS who made a push for Turner to get out of the mat game in 1993 because of its perpetual unprofitability.

However, Turner declared he would stay with wrestling because it was the program which first drew major advertising revenues for WTCG (now WTBS), when it was a small Atlanta independent station in the early 1970s.

Zone Debuts To Better Numbers

NEW YORK—The new *WWF Action Zone* perked up Sunday ratings for USA Network in its Oct. 23 premiere.

Zone, top-lined by a Bret Hart-Owen Hart WWF title bout, scored a 2.0 rating and 5.5 per cent share of audience, 33 per cent higher than the 1.5 September average for *WWF All-American*. *Zone* ended in third place among the six cable mat shows for the week.

Monday Night Raw led the Nielsens for the 28th consecutive head-to-head week (for the week ending Oct. 24) but fell again to a low 2.5/3.5. *WCW Saturday Night* was the runnerup with a 2.3/5.0, its top number since August.

Barring a rally on Halloween night, *Raw* is expected to finish with its lowest one-month average since September 1993.

WCW has to consider its rating for the live *Main Event* preliminary to *Halloween Havoc* a dismal failure. The Sunday night show—TBS' first attempt at a live pre-game show to a pay-per-view—only drew a 1.5/2.7, its lowest figure in three months.

In the morning, *WCW Pro* (1.4/5.7) squeaked by *Mania* (1.2/3.8). For the week, WWF shows outpointed WCW's 1.9 to 1.73.

Matwatch Editorials

(Continued from Page 3)

earliest years of wrestling pay-per-view. One of the biggest whoppers was when *TV Guide* and *Sports Illustrated* bought Titan's line of attracting a 10 per cent buy-rate for the first *Summer Slam*, a figure at least double the actual payout. The litany of exaggerations is endless.

While Titan's published accounts aren't quite the fairy tale for the most recent WWF pay-per-view, the 1.7/410,000 buys figure is about 30 per cent higher than the estimate from most analysts within the cable industry and subscription trade publications.

Former University of Georgia School of Journalism Dean Scott Cutlip contends 40 per cent of the news stories in America are plants from p.r. offices. With this continuing pattern, Titan Sports figures heavily into that percentage. However, *Matwatch '94* suggests a mainline publication of the import of *Electronic Media* should hold Titan and any other organization to accountability before publishing inflated subscription figures.

WHY?

World Championship Wrestling is producing and promoting a pay-per-view telecast within the week which will feature some of the most talented artists in Mexican Lucha Libre wrestling.

However, aside from newsletter subscribers and cable viewers with access to national Spanish channels, few American matwatchers have a clue who the wrestlers are or what is important about their confrontations.

The cost of producing this event is estimated at between \$300,000-500,000 with doubts running high as to whether the event can pay off in a profit through pay subscriptions.

WCW has promoted the show on-air as if it were making some type of apology. The company's lead play-by-play announcer demonstrated alleged petulance at having to do the research necessary to properly sell the Lucha Libre personalities and style.

Matwatch '94 asks one simple question. For a company in the reported financial deficits WCW is in, if it was not prepared to devote the time and energy to present this program in a fashion which gives it a competitive chance to succeed in the marketplace—why do it at all?

MATWATCH '94

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